



Evaluation of model predicted top-of-atmosphere radiation and cloud parameters over Africa with observations from GERB and SEVIRI

Wouter Greuell and Erik van Meijgaard

Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute, De Bilt, Netherlands (greuell@knmi.nl)

We compared the Regional Atmospheric Climate Model version 2 (RACMO) with satellite data by simultaneously looking at cloud properties and top-of-atmosphere (TOA) fluxes. We used cloud properties retrieved from Spinning Enhanced Visible and Infrared Imager (SEVIRI) data and TOA short-wave and long-wave outgoing radiative fluxes measured by one of the Geostationary Earth Radiation Budget (GERB) sensors. Both SEVIRI and GERB resolve the diurnal cycle extremely well with 96 images per day. To test the physical parameterizations of the model, RACMO was run for a domain enclosing Africa and part of the surrounding oceans. Simulations for July 2006, forced at the lateral boundaries by ERA-Interim re-analyses, show generally accurate positioning of the various cloud regimes, but also some important model-observation differences, which we tried to reduce by altering model parameterizations. These differences are: 1) TOA albedo differences in clear-sky regions like the Sahara and southern Africa. These differences were considerably reduced by prescribing the surface albedo from MODIS satellite data. 2) A considerable overestimation of outgoing long-wave radiation within the continental ITCZ caused by the fact that modeled cirrus clouds are far too thin. 3) Underestimation by the model of cloud cover, condensed water path and albedo of the stratocumulus fields off the coast of Angola. We reduced these underestimations by suppressing the amount of turbulent mixing above the boundary layer, by prescribing droplet radii derived from SEVIRI data and by assuming in-cloud horizontal homogeneity for the radiation calculations. 4) Overestimation by the model of the albedo of the trade wind cumulus fields over the Atlantic Ocean. We argue that this overestimation is likely caused by a model overestimation of condensed water path. In general, our analyses demonstrate the power of the simultaneous evaluation of the TOA fluxes and cloud properties.